4: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FL11 Luo FL11

CHAPTER III.

Nilotic Tribes of Kavirondo.

101 The generic name used of these peoples by themselves is Ja-Luo. The Bantu Kavirondo people call them Awa-Nyoro. A very common term for them is Wa-Nife.

231 241 361 *Modes of subsistence.*—They all live by agriculture. They reside in fixed villages of from ten to fifty huts. Nearly all the villages are surrounded by euphorbia hedges; formerly many villages had mud and occasionally stone walls, but this custom has died out. They breed cattle, sheep, goats, and fowls.

[224] 226 *Hunting and fishing.*—They dig pitfalls for elephants and also spear elephants. They catch large quantities of fish in the Lake Victoria Nyanza by means of large conical wicker traps "*dema*." The process is as follows:—They have two enormously long ropes; one end of each rope is secured on shore, and the ropes are then paid out into the lake, one rope floats on the surface and from it hangs a fringe of papyrus stalks; the other rope is a ground rope, and is weighted with stones, and the two ropes are connected at intervals. By means of canoes these ropes are gradually brought round in a semi-circle the size of which gradually decreases. The fish rush shorewards to escape from the drawing in of the net, and rush into the mouth of the big wicker traps which are placed in a row in the shallow water near the shore. At the same time the women walk up and down dragging smaller meshed traps in which they collect myriads of tiny fish the size of a sardine. They fish a great deal at night by torchlight. They state that they get the best hauls of fish after rain; in the dry season they catch [824] comparatively few. Rafts of ambatch wood are used for laying out the net (ambatch is a very light spongy wood growing on the lake shore; it has a prickly [439] bark). They split and dry large quantities of fish and carry it inland from the lake for considerable distances to sell for grain.

227 601 Lines and hooks are also used to a certain extent by the Nyakach people and others. The people bordering the lake possess a few dug-out canoes and also a few of the sewn canoes bought from Baganda or Basoga.

441 *Bridges.*—They build rough bridges of timber across the rivers when in flood, but not suspension bridges like the North Kavirondo.

264 252 *Cooking, etc.*—They cook in earthen pots inside their huts, and also in the verandah of the huts. All cooking is done by women. The food is served up in little baskets. The father eats with his sons; they generally eat in a little separate hut with open sides built for the purpose. Women eat separately and inside the house.

372 *Fire.*—They know the use of firesticks but rarely need them, as they can always obtain a glowing ember from one or other of their neighbours.

[pp. 11-25 not processed]

241 Besides weeding, there is much to be done to protect the crop.
[789] Hail storms do a lot of damage at times, and to protect the crops a "medicine" is employed called 'migalo magalo pe." This consists of herbs tied in a bunch to the top of a pole about 6—8 feet high, which is stuck in the middle of the field. (Herdsmen too, use this
[231] to keep themselves dry while out with the cattle, and I have seen a herdsman accompanying the cows with these herbs tied to the top
[674] of his spear.) Except in time of famine, stealing from the crop is unknown, which contrasts favourably with complaints made from time to time that Natives steal maize and coffee from European farms. In their own community such an offence is practically unknown. But
241 four-legged depredators are a serious problem in certain localities.
417 Fields are enclosed in fences of the branches of thorn trees, laid on the ground, and these do give a certain protection against wild pigs,
136 monkeys and baboons. But they are of no use against hippo and elephant. To protect crops, mainly sweet potato, against the hippo it is the practice to erect a small temporary hut, which is occupied at night by a guard armed with a couple of spears. It must be a weary business, for the potatoes are cultivated close to the lake edge where mosquitoes swarm, so between the hippo and the mosquitoes the guard
● [224] must have a trying time. In old days before the Game laws came in, organized hunts were held, which were very successful.

241 The most difficult animal is, of course, the elephant. These have disappeared from Central Kavirondo but still infest districts like
136 Mirunda and Sakwa in South Kavirondo. They can do heavy damage both to millet and sweet potato. The beating of pots and pans is tried to scare away the elephant, while occasionally the more daring venture forth from the hut to throw stones or otherwise drive away the beasts. This is an operation attended with peril in the dark of the night, and occasionally lives are lost in this way. Lives too are lost through guards mistaking their fellow guards for wild animals. Jok, one of the most famous of ancestors of the Luo, is said to have lost his life in this way. The story is that before going off to drink beer, he told his sons to go on guard in the field that night. They refused to his face, but when he had gone thought better of it, and went on guard. He returned from the beer drink, and went to see what was happening in the field, believing that there was no guard. His sons mistook his footsteps for that of a pig, and speared him with fatal results. Similar things still occur from time to time.

241 Birds, especially weaver birds, are a pest as the grain crop
136 ripens. Scarecrows are employed, both mechanical and human. Of the former an inverted cooking pot on the top of a short pole is a
857 common device. Boys are employed in large numbers when the birds are most troublesome, and their harsh cries are quite a part of the

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blocks on the upper part of the arm. The wooden blocks are coloured red with oxide of iron. A band strung with small pieces of wood of the same colour is sometimes worn round the forehead. Some of the married men wear a semi-circle of ivory on the forehead, made of the split canine teeth of the hippopotamus. (The tooth, however, I am informed, is not split, but ground down until it is only an eighth of an inch thick.) Others wear the tusks of a wart-hog. The Ja-luo men, like most of the tribes of Nilotic origin, frequently adopt a curious stork-like attitude, standing on some hillock or ant-hill on one leg with the other leg bent and the sole of the foot apposed to the inner side of the knee of the leg on which the body is poised. They usually wear sandals of leather when travelling.

The Ja-luo live much by *agriculture*. They cultivate *sorghum, sweet potatoes, peas, beans, eleusine, pumpkins, tobacco, and hemp.* Salt is made from the ashes of reeds. They eat practically *all kinds of meat* except the hyæna. Young men eat leopard in order to make them fierce in war. The crested crane is universally protected, and is never killed. The women do not eat fowls, and some women do not eat sheep or eggs. Some eat hippopotamus, and some refuse that meat. Women do not drink milk, but eat it cooked with food. They have a disagreeable custom of mixing cows' urine with the milk of the cow. The urine is allowed to stand a day or two in order to increase its flavour. The people say that this admixture increases the amount of butter in the milk. They like the flavour, and think that it has medicinal value. They kill oxen by sticking a knife into the jugular vein. The head must be pointed to the west during the operation. Sheep and goats are killed in the same manner. Besides the flesh of fowls, cattle, sheep, and goats, they eat large quantities of fish, which they obtain from the rivers, and, above all, from the waters of the Victoria Nyanza.

Cooking is done entirely by women in earthen pots inside the hut or on the verandah, and the food is served in little wicker baskets. Father and sons eat together in a little separate hut which has open sides. Women eat separately from the men inside their own houses.

They do not *hunt* much with dogs, but catch a good deal of game in pitfalls. They will also attack the elephant with spears. Fish is caught in the Victoria Nyanza by means of large, conical wicker traps called "dema." The process is as follows: They bring two very long ropes, one end of each of which is firmly secured to the shore. One rope lies, weighted, along the bottom under the water, the other floats on the surface, but from it hangs a fringe of papyrus stalks. The two ropes above and below correspond with its other, and are connected at intervals with strings to ensure their correspondence, while the fringe of papyrus

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storm of rain broke over the valley, and next morning the complainants were back again to point out that his refusal to come in at the Bwana's summons had so frightened the rain-maker that he had sent rain next day, and to offer most hearty thanks for the white man's beneficent interference.

Though the Jaluo have good manners on the whole, some of their customs are decidedly the reverse of civilised. In common with the other Nilotic tribes of British East Africa, they draw blood from the living cattle and drink it. The custom, however, has its justification, for in many parts of Kavirondo this is the only method by which the natives can obtain salt. Also the older men are confirmed drunkards and hemp smokers, which causes them to age very quickly and probably shortens the average term of life.

Those who dwell on the shores of the great lake and of the larger rivers are expert fishermen: they catch fish with rod and line, a sunken trawl line, in weirs, by woven grass substitutes for nets, and by spearing them with four-pronged wooden spears which they throw with extraordinary accuracy. They are also keen huntsmen, though of little use out shooting, and possess highly trained dogs which will run down an oribi or hare or find a wounded guinea fowl knocked down by their throwing sticks.

In character they are naturally very honest, except with regard to cattle, a temptation which no East African can withstand. They are extremely jealous of any relations between their women and men of other tribes, nations or colour; but among themselves an unmarried woman who has reached the age of puberty may have as many friends, as they call them, as she likes, provided that they come from another clan; after marriage she must confine her attentions to her husband.

Perhaps their most pleasant trait is their love of fun and laughter: the feeblest joke or the slightest bit of horse-play will set them in roars of laughter. For hospitality and industry they have a well-earned name; they are, in fact, in every way most amenable when treated with a little kindness and consideration. They have a considerable knowledge of blacksmith's work, though the spears which they turn out cannot be compared with those of the Masai for fine work. With the latter tribe, however, they show a well-developed artistic sense, the designs on their shields being generally handsome and well carried out. They are also very fond of music—of a kind: they play upon an eight-stringed harp, which is mainly used to provide an accompaniment to their extempore songs, composed in the heroic or comic vein.

Speaking generally and comparatively they are a peaceful, non-aggressive folk, though the common impression that they are cowards is ridiculously wrong: in the writer's small experience of African tribes they have shown themselves better fighters than the much-lauded Swahili, and better policemen than the dreaded Masai; they are certainly more amenable to discipline and less inclined to prefer their own wisdom to that of their officers.

On the other hand they are most painfully litigious: civil cases which arose in